

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: "I Am Beowulf!": The Figure of the Hero in Beowulf

STUDENT: Andrea Dolinsky

DEGREE: Master of Arts

COLLEGE: Sciences and Humanities

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This study examines the differences in the figure of the hero from the original Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*, to modern adaptations of the poem and the character of Beowulf. The boastful proclamation "I am Beowulf!" delivered by the protagonist in Robert Zemeckis' 2007 film *Beowulf*, epitomizes the individuality of the hero present in the more recent adaptations that have replaced the collective hero of Anglo-Saxon society. Changes in *Beowulf* scholarship created this individualistic Beowulf through applying Christian values to the poem and emphasizing the poem's fantastical elements. Functioning in tandem with these critical shifts, the popularity of the American cowboy hero and the loss of faith in government in the 1960s and 70s helped to create the individual hero praised in today's society, to which the modern Beowulf representations had to comply in order to successfully exist in today's cultural marketplace.